

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY

TWO BEGGARS

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:22, 23).

THESE verses are taken from the story of the rich man and Lazarus, as told by our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 16:19-31. The reader should study every word of the narrative carefully.

Since the dawn of history, man has been speculating and philosophizing upon what lies beyond death. To him death is a mystic door from which no traveler has returned to tell the secrets of that world to which it is an entrance.

That the Old Testament saints saw life beyond death cannot be denied.

- Abraham counted on God’s giving back Isaac should he have slain him on Mount Moriah (Hebrews 11:19).
- The dying Jacob spoke of being gathered unto his people (Genesis 49:29).

Many other examples may be given, yet it must be admitted that they saw this truth but dimly, for the grave largely bounded the horizon of the Old Testament saints.

The norm of every great doctrine is found somewhere in the Bible. For example, the norm of “love” is found in I Corinthians 13, while the norm of the “resurrection” is found in I Corinthians 15. Again, the norm of “rapture” is found in I Thessalonians 4; in Luke 16:19-31, the Lord Jesus Christ, who **“brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”** (II Timothy 1:10), has given us the norm of the doctrine of what lies beyond that mystic door called death.

This narrative could very appropriately be called the story of two beggars

- One who begged in time,
- The other who begged in eternity.

We want to note some of the truths expressly stated; others, implied.

I. The Teaching Concerning Wealth

The Jews thought that prosperity was a mark of God's favor. This story not only teaches that prosperity is not always a mark of God's favor but it also teaches that poverty is not always a mark of His displeasure. The Scriptures have a great amount of warning about the dangers of riches.

During our years of pastorate I was often asked to pray for certain poor folk and young folk. I always answered, "You have the wrong request—always pray for the 'old folk' and the 'rich folk.'" I believe that Scripture and experience both confirm the truth of my statement.

This story does not teach the impossibility of the salvation of the rich, but it corrects the idea prevailing at that time that riches was a mark of God's favor, and shows the danger of riches.

One of the finest things I have ever read from the pen of man was found in the will of J. P. Morgan, as follows:

"I commit my soul into the hands of the Saviour in full assurance that, having redeemed it in His most precious blood, He will present it faultless before the throne of His heavenly Father, and I entreat my children to maintain and defend, at all hazards, and at every cost of personal sacrifice, the doctrine of complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ once offered, and through that alone."

This statement in the will of that great financier should make many a modernistic preacher blush with shame. That great financial wizard did not trust in his millions but in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. All Die

"**In Adam all die**" is the verdict of divine revelation. Out of the countless billions who have trod upon this earth, all have died of the past generations save two, and they escaped by special dispensation from God. The present generation will go out by death if the Lord tarries. The grave alike awaits the bodies of rich and poor. There may be a pompous funeral, a gilded casket, flowers in profusion, and a masterly funeral oration, but a grave awaits the body.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, and all that wealth e'er gave,
Alike await the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

III. A Study in Names

There is no scriptural warrant whatsoever that the rich man was named Dives. His name is not given. The poor man was named Lazarus. The word means "*without help*." Of him the poet wrote,

They rattle the bones over the stones,
He is only a pauper whom nobody owns.

But that statement is not true. While he had a funeral similar to the dogs which licked his sores, God “owned” him.

When he was born, his parents gave him a name which meant “*without help.*” They must have been godly parents. They knew that they could transmit only a sinful nature to their son, and if help came it must be from God. They must have believed the doctrine enunciated by Jonah in his strange submarine prayer-room “**Salvation is of the Lord**” (See chapter 5).

IV. Existence After Death

If the story teaches anything, this is the gist. The Lord Jesus Christ, who came to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel, drew aside the curtains of that mystic door and let us look in. The word translated hell is hades. It is the place where the souls of men went after death. It is the place to which Christ went while His body was in the tomb (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27).

This and other scriptures show that hades was divided into two parts—one for the righteous, the other for the unrighteous. Paradise, the place of the righteous (Luke 23:43) was emptied at the resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 4:8), so that paradise is now where Christ is (II Corinthians 12:4). Because of this, it is written in II Corinthians 5:8, of the believer who dies, “**Absent from the body . . . present with the Lord.**”

The body of the believer “sleeps” in the grave awaiting the first resurrection when the Lord returns for His own (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17). The body of the unbeliever also sleeps in the grave, while the soul remains in the place where the rich man is. At the second resurrection soul and body reunite for the judgment of the great white throne (Revelation 20:5, 11-15).

V. No Chance After Death

The man who had moved out of his earthly tabernacle was in full possession of his faculties. In fact the chambers of these faculties were more illuminated than while he was on earth. His memory, conscience, reason, affection, and imagination—the faculties of the soul—all were working better in hades than while he was on earth. He was now reviewing the deeds of his lifetime in the light of eternity. He made two agonized petitions, but too late. He began to pray on the wrong side of that door—death. There are those who attempt to teach a chance after death. Let me say it kindly, but firmly—of all the narratives in the Word of God, here is the most logical place for such teaching to be found—**BUT NOT A WORD TO INDICATE IT.**

VI. Beyond the Help of Human Prayers

There is a system that teaches that some who have passed the portals of death may be assisted by the prayers of the living on earth. Again let me say it kindly, but firmly—of all the narratives in the Word of God, here is the most logical place to find such teaching—**BUT NOT A WORD.**

Lazarus did not need the help of the prayers of the saints on earth had he been able to have received them, while the rich man was beyond the reach of human aid. He was left alone to face God “for the deeds done in the body.”

VII. The Word of God the Means of Salvation

When the rich man pleaded for Lazarus to be sent back to his father’s house to warn his five brethren, he was curtly told by Abraham, “**They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.**”

In other words they had the written Word of God, just as you have it, dear reader, save you have it in its completeness. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “**It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**” (John 6:63). Again it is written, “**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever**” (I Peter 1:23).

Heed the Word of God! Listen to His voice!

Soon that voice will cease its calling,
Now it speaks, and speaks to thee:
Sinner, heed the gracious message—
To the blood for refuge flee:
Take salvation—
Take it NOW, and happy be.

Note: There are those who say that this story is a parable. If a parable, I ask you, what are the parabolic dogs that licked the parabolic sores of the parabolic beggar as he lay at the parabolic gate of the parabolic rich man’s parabolic house watching him eat his parabolic food? Such nonsense!

“When the plain sense makes good sense, why seek some other sense?”

~ end of chapter 20 ~

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